

*Funding related to work done on White River Junction rail bridge*

Gov. Peter Shumlin and Vermont's Congressional Delegation today announced that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved over \$11 million under the Public Assistance program related to the extensive work done on Bridge 501 along the Vermont Railway line in White River Junction following Tropical Storm Irene. The total estimated cost for the project currently stands at \$14.8 million. The severely damaged rail bridge was in imminent danger of collapse and would have effectively dammed the White River and caused severe flooding in nearby towns. VTrans worked to stabilize, reopen and ultimately restore the important transportation link in record time.

"Once again, Vermonters got the job done in record time to get this bridge re-opened," Gov. Shumlin said. "Thanks to the hard work of Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders, and Rep. Peter Welch, this federal assistance will go a long way toward covering the cost of that work."

In a joint statement, Leahy, Sanders and Welch said: "Restoring this vital rail link was one of our state's highest priorities. It was also one of the costliest. Federal reimbursement for our recovery from Irene was such a high priority for us in Congress because our small state needs a strong federal partner to build back from such widespread destruction. We are gratified that our work enabled the State of Vermont to move quickly and confidently in rebuilding Bridge 501, and in record time. We commend Governor Shumlin and all who helped get the job done."

The bridge was one of six railroad bridges damaged and part of over 200 railroad miles that were rendered impassible by Tropical Storm Irene, which hit the state on Aug. 28. The entire Vermont rail system was shut down that day, but re-opened in its entirety by early October.

The effort to save Bridge 501 was a massive undertaking, involving the largest crane in New England and underwater welding teams working in the swift currents of the White River. Both piers were undermined and one had sagged by 6 feet, leaving the superstructure within inches of slipping into the river. Vermont Transportation Agency teams worked with Stantec Engineering around the clock to construct temporary piers to get the primary rail line to Newport back in operation by October 11. Work continued into the winter, as one pier was replaced and the other reinforced. Site work is expected to continue into the summer.

